



New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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SUBJECT: Surveillance Cameras in Department of Children and Families (DCF)
Regional Schools

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 15, 2013

A. OBJECTIVES

To reduce security threats by use of a closed-circuit video surveillance system.

To assist in promoting a safe environment for students, infants, toddlers, and staff members through the use of a closed-circuit video surveillance system.

To ensure the maintenance, safeguarding, and appropriate use of surveillance cameras in and around DCF Regional School buildings.

B. DEFINITIONS

“Acceptable resolution range” means the image quality that is deemed adequate for accurate recognition of recorded images, achieved by the settings for image quality, resolution, and frame-rate.

“Closed-circuit video surveillance system” means a system of fixed cameras in and around the school which transmits images from cameras to a digital hard drive storage system. Output can be seen on a monitor that displays the images of each camera and/or on a desktop computer monitor. The system allows “live” viewing, reviewing, and making a copy of periods of time based on search criteria for the time-stamped recorded timeframe.

C. STANDARDS

The Education Supervisor (ES) in each Regional School shall be responsible for the implementation of this policy.

The ES in conjunction with the DCF Office of Education (OOE) Manager of Operations shall maintain and safeguard the closed-circuit video surveillance system.

The Education Technology Unit at the OOE shall support the technical aspects of the closed-circuit video surveillance systems.

D. GENERAL PROCEDURES

1. Communicating the rationale for use of the closed-circuit video surveillance system:

- a. The ES, and the OOE Manager of Operations, as appropriate, shall periodically inform the students, parents, and staff members that the use of the closed-circuit video surveillance system is beneficial for the safety of the school building, school grounds, and the students and staff members, by presenting the information points contained in the “Use of the Closed Circuit Video Surveillance System” document (Attachment 1).
- b. The ES shall present this information to all new students and staff members within the first five days of enrollment or hire, as applicable.
- c. The information may be adopted for use in the school’s “Student Handbook” or equivalent.

2. Safeguarding of equipment: The closed-circuit video surveillance system hard drive shall be located in a secure area, typically the ES’s locked office closet. Keys to this area shall be the responsibility of the ES and his/her designated alternate and shall be safeguarded at all times.

3. Local management of the closed-circuit video surveillance system: In each Regional School, the ES is designated as the person responsible for managing, accessing, and maintaining the system by implementing the following procedures:

- a. The ES shall be given his/her own user name and password by the Education Technology Unit of the OOE, authorizing “advanced user rights” to the surveillance system.

- b. The ES shall safeguard this user name and password and not share this with any other staff.
 - c. The ES shall designate a second person from the school to act as an alternate, who shall also have “advanced user rights.”
 - d. This second person shall have his/her own user name and password which will enable access to the system and shall not share the user name and password with any other staff.
 - e. The ES shall verify daily that the DVR unit is recording by observing the continuous light corresponding to each camera (on the unit) as well as the monitor’s multiple screen display.
4. **Administrative management of the closed-circuit video surveillance system:** Only Office of Education staff designated by the Director of the OOE shall have full administrative access rights to the surveillance system.
5. **Signage regarding the use of surveillance camera system:**
- a. At the front entrance of the school building, a sign shall be prominently displayed which indicates that video surveillance cameras are in use.
 - b. Questions regarding the use of the video camera surveillance system shall be directed to the ES and OOE Manager of Operations, as appropriate.
6. **Number and placement of cameras:** The ES and the OOE Manager of Operations shall decide on the number and placement of cameras that are needed at each Regional School to assure the proper surveillance of the school program and school grounds. The location of cameras may include but not be limited to:
- a. Front entrance (exterior)
 - b. Other exit/entrance areas (exterior)
 - c. The school grounds/yard areas
 - d. School bus parking areas
 - e. Nursery rooms
 - f. Hallways

- g. Cafeteria
 - h. Front lobby
 - i. Room designated as a “Crisis Intervention Area” (camera required, as noted in OOE Policy # 33, “Student Conduct”).
 - j. Classrooms
 - k. Staff and visitor parking areas
7. **Prohibited areas for placement of cameras:** Cameras shall not be located in any student bathrooms, staff bathrooms or any shower area.
8. **Provision for training on the equipment:** The Education Technology Unit at the OOE shall provide training to the ES and the school’s second designated person on the use and management of the surveillance camera system.
9. **Maintaining good working order of the surveillance camera system:**
- a. The ES and the school’s second designated person shall ensure that the dome coverings for each camera are cleaned as needed so that the clarity of the images is maximized.
 - b. Any broken, cracked, or scorched (by sunlight) domes or non-working cameras shall be reported to the OOE Manager of Operations.
 - c. As feasible, adequate lighting in exterior areas shall be provided so that nighttime images will be viewable.
 - d. All video surveillance equipment shall be maintained by the Education Technology Unit or the ES, as appropriate, according to the manufacturer’s guidelines, including firmware updates as these are released.
 - e. Questions relating to the maintenance of the system shall be addressed to the OOE Manager of Operations or the Education Technology Unit, as appropriate.
 - f. The Regional School and the OOE is not liable for any malfunctions of the surveillance system.
10. **Routine retention of digital recordings from the surveillance system:**

- a. The surveillance system shall be set to an acceptable resolution range with the goal of preserving at least 18 days of recording before the “overwrite” feature begins.
- b. The acceptable resolution range shall be determined by the Education Technology Unit with consultation from the OOE Manager of Operations.

11. Notable events recorded on the surveillance system:

- a. When an event has occurred in the school building or on school grounds which may be viewable from the hard drive storage, the ES shall access the system and search the recorded images to locate the period of time in question.
- b. The ES may request assistance from the Manager of Operations and the Education Technology Unit, as needed.
- c. The ES shall complete an Unusual Incident Report, if warranted by the event, and notify the assigned Regional Administrator, the Manager of Operations, and the Director, OOE.
- d. The ES shall make a copy of the segment of video that contains the notable event to prevent it from being overwritten in 18 days.

12. Requests from law enforcement, probation officer, the Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU), the Office of the Public Defender, the DCF Office of Employee Relations, the courts, etc. for a digital/video copy of an incident:

- a. When a request for a digital/video copy of an incident is made, the ES shall notify the Education Technology Unit, the Regional Administrator, the Manager of Operations, and the Director, OOE.
- b. The Regional School’s law enforcement unit, (pertaining to Section “E” of OOE Policy #4, “Student Records and Confidentiality”), shall be activated, as determined by the Director, OOE, or his/her designee.
- c. The law enforcement unit shall be authorized to provide a digital/video copy on a CD or DVD of the matter in question to the appropriate authorities after receiving the request in writing on official letterhead. A signature from the person receiving the copy shall be obtained on school letterhead, noting the date and nature of the images on the CD or DVD. This document shall be maintained by the ES at the school in a secure location.

- d. The section of the digital/video recording provided shall contain only the period of time in question surrounding an incident but shall include the “footage” that sufficiently conveys the nature of the incident.
- e. To the greatest extent possible, the images on the digital/video recording shall contain only the staff member(s), student(s), or area(s) in question, although it must be acknowledged that this may not be possible in all cases, if other students or staff members move in and out of the frames that were recorded. However, students and staff members cannot presume a right to privacy in public areas of a school building such as hallways, classrooms, spaces used for a gymnasium, cafeterias, and school grounds.
- f. Images from a DCF Regional School’s video surveillance system are considered law enforcement unit records and may be disclosed to a police officer, a probation officer, and the courts without parental consent.
- g. The ES shall complete an Unusual Incident Report (UIR) (if not already completed) to describe the nature of the event and additionally to indicate that a CD/DVD copy was provided to law enforcement.
- h. The authorized entity which received a CD/DVD copy of an event shall maintain, secure and dispose of their copy in accordance with their authority, protocols and policies.

13. Disposition of copies of an event held by the school and OOE Director:

- a. The ES shall, if not already provided, forward an archival copy to the Director, OOE, labeling it with the name(s), date, time, and nature of the incident.
 - 1) This archival copy shall be maintained and secured at the OOE under the supervision of the Director, for 28 years after the date of the incident, after which time it shall be destroyed.
- b. The school copy, also appropriately labeled with the name(s), date, time and nature of the incident, shall be managed according to the following directions:
 - 1) For an incident involving a student concerning disciplinary actions which may or may not include violence, vandalism and/or substance abuse, send the school copy of the incident to the student’s district of residence at the time of discharge or graduation. This is part of the disciplinary file and shall be identified as such and shall be forwarded separately from the student records.

- 2) For incidents involving staff or members of the public, known or unknown, the school copy shall be destroyed 30 days after the incident.

Tracy Nowlin
Director

Attachment: